**Safe and Responsible Internet Use**

1. For many high school students, they have been active online socially for years by the time they have reached the 9th grade. I would keep in mind that teaching online rules would refer to mistakes that they may have already committed. Regarding privacy, I would first talk about the security passwords and usernames. Most importantly, especially as it relates to social media, I would try to help them remember that something digitized and posted online (or sent via phone) may be accessible forever, regardless of whatever retroactive actions they may take. I would help them to do a thought experiment where they picture themselves older and dealing with an embarrassing picture or post that could have lasting effects on their relationships and professional lives. I would request that they treat the online world similarly to the face-to-face world around them—etiquette applied in one world should be applied in the other, and that anonymity is much more difficult to achieve online than they think.
2. Similar to what I mentioned, the content that older students post (pictures, videos, posts or comments) is perhaps the most troubling issue. As noted on the “SafeKids” website, being exposed to harmful content typically is not the most concerning issue. Rather, committing errors by posting revealing or private information (or content that could be damaging to others) can be very dangerous and can have long-lasting effects. I would ask the students to imagine that what they post is literally accessible to everyone, and that they need to think when posting about if they really want that information to be public.
3. Cyber-bulling is bullying that takes place over the Internet ([www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)). Bullying online, though just as severe as other forms of bullying, can be unintentional and can easily spiral out of control. Since the audience of any particular content could potentially include anyone within earshot of Internet access (nearly everyone in the world), hurtful comments not intended to be heard or read can easily make it to a victim. Furthermore, the perceived anonymity of the Internet may make individuals more likely to bully than they would otherwise. Victims should be encouraged to “block” harmful individuals or content from phone or social networking lists. Also, parents are encouraged to involve the school if indeed the initiator of the cyberbullying is a classmate.
4. Sexting includes the sending of sexually explicit phone messages, pictures, or videos ([www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)). Youth need to know about the possible consequences of sexting, so that they are at least aware of what can happen if they make bad choices. In particular, they need to know about the long term consequences—legal, professional, educational, and personal—of sending information that can be easily forwarded to and/or saved for unintended persons or reasons. Furthermore, kids need to know that they should report sexually inappropriate content to you and/or an adult at school. Given the legal implications of sending sexually explicit materials to minors, parents should consider contacting the legal authorities.
5. To help students protect themselves online from cyber danger, I would recommend that practicing cyber security should be part of every technology activity (at least implicitly). Teachers need to talk about passwords and password protection, as well as about ways in which digital information can become available to unwanted parties.